DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 413 048 PS 025 841

TITLE	Pre-School Education Legislation: Curriculum Guidelines for Pre-School Education Ruling No. 5220/97.
INSTITUTION	Ministry of Education, Lisbon (Portugal).
PUB DATE	1997-09-00
NOTE	26p.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Classroom - Teacher (052) -- Reports - General (140)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Curriculum Development; *Curriculum Guides; Educational Development; *Educational Objectives; Foreign Countries; Parent Teacher Cooperation; *Preschool Curriculum; *Preschool Education; Preschool Teachers; Teacher Role
IDENTIFIERS	*Portugal

ABSTRACT

This pamphlet discusses new curriculum guidelines, as approved under Ruling number 5220/97, for preschool education in Portugal. The law defines preschool as a first step in basic education that complements the education provided by the family, and recommends that schools work in collaboration with parents to foster the training and balanced development of the child. The guidelines explained here are intended to contribute to an improvement in the quality of preschool education in Portugal. This document begins by examining the general principles and pedagogical aims as set out in the Pre-school Education Law. Aims include: (1) to promote the child's personal and social development based on experiences of democratic life within a perspective of education for citizenship; and (2) to foster the child's integration into different social groups, teaching respect for different cultures and encouraging a growing awareness of his or her role as a member of society. The document next discusses the grounds and organization of curriculum guidelines, including stipulations for the inclusiveness of preschools, the role of early education in establishing long-term learning, and the link between expression and communication and a knowledge of the world. Finally, the document discusses the general guidelines for the preschool teacher. The guidelines describe the linked teacher roles of observing, planning, acting, assessing, communicating, and articulating. (JPB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

Ministry of Education - Portugal
Department for Basic Education

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED 413 048

Pre-school Education

Legislation

Curriculum Guidelines for Pre-school Education
Ruling no 5220/97

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Teresa Vasconcelos
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

gabinete para a expansão e desenvolvimento da educação pré-escolar
(Office for the Expansion and Development of Pre-school Education)

September 1997

PS 025841

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Ruling nº 5220/97 (2nd series) - In Article 2, Law nº 5/97 (10 February), the Pre-school Education Law, defines pre-school education as the first stage of basic education in the process of lifelong education, with Article 8, subparagraph b) stipulating that it lies within the State's power to define curriculum objectives and guidelines.

These legal dispositions are articulated with the stipulations of Decree-Law nº 286/89 (29 August), which established the principles of the organisation of the syllabus for basic and secondary education. These were further developed by Decree-Law nº 147/97 (11 June), which defined the juridical system for the development and expansion of the pre-school education network.

Within this context, approval of curriculum guidelines for pre-school education is a decisive step towards ensuring the quality of the national pre-school education network, involving the definition of common reference points to guide the work undertaken by preschool teachers in the schools making up the network, regardless of whether they belong to the public or private sector.

Curriculum guidelines are thus a set of general educational and organisational principles to help preschool teachers make

decisions concerning day-to-day practice, i e , how to conduct the education process to be undertaken with the children

Thus, subject to the terms of Decree-Law nº 286/89 (29 August), Article 3, Law nº 5/97 (10 February, Articles 2 and 8, and Decree-Law 147/97 (11 June), Articles 13 and 16, I determine the following

1 Curriculum guidelines for pre-school education are hereby approved, the general principles of which are attached to this Ruling and are to be considered an integral part of the same

2 For the 1997-98 school year, curriculum guidelines for pre-school education are to be considered as recommendations, but they become binding from the 1998-99 school year onwards They are expected to be revised in the 2001-02 school year

3 The Department of Basic Education, together with the Office for the Expansion and Development of Pre-school Education, will, within 60 days of the date of publication of this Ruling, ensure the publication of these syllabus guidelines for pre-school education

10 July 1997 - the Secretary of State for Education and Innovation, *Ana Benavente*

CURRICULUM GUIDELINES FOR PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

INTRODUCTION

The curriculum guidelines for pre-school education approved under the terms of this Ruling are the result of a wide-ranging and comprehensive debate which led to a gradual reworking of the original proposals.

The diversity and richness of the contributions made by services and institutions which play an important role in pre-school education, as well as from groups of preschool teachers who were willing to analyse the first working document and submit their criticisms and suggestions, made it possible to rework and improve the final document. This process also made it possible to distinguish general principles of the curriculum guidelines mentioned in the title of this Ruling from their practical pedagogical development published by the Department of Basic Education. The complementary nature of these two documents is intended to make them a useful instrument for preschool teachers to reflect on their practice and

to enable them to find the most suitable educational solutions to the problems posed by the children they work with.

Curriculum guidelines are a set of principles to support preschool teachers in decisions on his/her practice, i.e., how to conduct the educational process to be developed with the children.

Curriculum guidelines are a common reference for all nursery teachers working within the national pre-school education network and are intended to provide organisation for the educational component. They do not constitute a curriculum in themselves, since they are intended as guidelines rather than a prescriptive list of learning targets to be achieved by the children. They may also be differentiated from the curriculum notion since they are more general and wide-ranging, i.e., they include the possibility of using various types of learning/teaching options and therefore, various types of curriculum.

In forming a frame of reference for all preschool teachers, curriculum guidelines are intended to contribute to promoting an improvement in the quality of preschool education.

This document is organised as follows:

1) General principles and pedagogical aims as set out in the Pre-school Education Law
2) Grounds and organisation of curriculum guidelines
3) General guidelines for the preschool teacher

Curriculum guidelines are based on the following foundations:

- development and learning are indissociable from each other;
- recognition that the child is the subject of the education process - which means starting with what the child already knows and valuing his/her knowledge as the basis for new learning. This new learning fundamentally envisages the development of curiosity, a critical approach and the ability to learn how to learn;
- articulated building of knowledge - which implies that the different areas to be included should not be seen as sealed compartments but approached in a global and integrated way;
- the requirement to respond to all children - which presupposes different teaching methods centred on co-operation, in which each child benefits from the educational process developed within the group.

Based on these foundations, curriculum development (which is the teacher's responsibility) will take into account:

Overall aims - listed in the Pre-School Education Law as intentions which should guide the professional practice of preschool teachers.

Organisation of the educational environment - as a support for the curriculum and fulfilment of its intentions. The educational environment includes different interacting levels: organisation of the group, classroom space and time; organisation of the educational establishment; relations with parents and other partners in the educational process;

Content areas - these are the general references to consider in planning and assessing learning situations and opportunities. There are three content areas:

- Personal and Social
- Expression/Communication, covering three domains

a) mastering different forms of expression - dramatic, plastic, body and musical expression;

b) mastering language and an initial approach to writing;

c) mastering mathematics

- Knowledge of the World;

Educational continuity - as a process which starts from what children already know and have learned, creating conditions for success in later learning;

Educational intentionality- which results from a process of reflecting on observation, planning, action and assessment carried out by the teacher, with the aim of matching classroom practice to the children's needs.

1. General principle and pedagogic aims listed in the Pre-school Education Framework Law

The Pre-school Education Law establishes as a general principle that "pre-school education is the first step in basic education seen as part of life-long education, and complements the education provided by the family, with which it should establish close co-operation, fostering the training and balanced development of the child, with a view to his/her full integration in society as an autonomous, free and co-operative individual".

This principle provides the grounds for the rest of the dispositions of this Law and for the general pedagogic aims defined for pre-school education:

a) To promote the child's personal and social development based on experiences of democratic life within a perspective of education for citizenship;

b) To foster the child's integration in different social groups, teaching respect for different cultures and encouraging a growing awareness of his/her role as a member of society;

c) To contribute to equality of opportunity in access to education and for successful learning;

d) To stimulate each child's overall development, with respect for his/her individual characteristics, inculcating patterns of behaviour favourable to significant and diversified learning;

e) To develop expression and communication through different forms as a means of relating, informing, raising aesthetic awareness and understanding the world;

f) To arouse curiosity and critical thought;

g) To ensure each child's welfare and safety, especially in terms of individual and collective health;

h) To evaluate precocious, deficient or socially unacceptable behaviour, promoting the best guidance for the child;

i) To encourage family participation in the educational process and establish real co-operation with the community.

2. Grounds and organisation of curriculum guidelines

The general principle and pedagogical aims listed in the Law provide the grounds for the organisation of curriculum guidelines for preschool education.

Thus the different statements contained within the general principle of the Law, quoted in this text, are related with the general aims, in order to make explicit how they are translated into syllabus guidelines: "Preschool education is the first step in basic education seen as part of life-long education".

This statement implies that it is at this stage that the conditions are created to enable children to continue learning, i.e., it is important that during their pre-school years children should learn how to learn. This statement is also the starting point for the general aim: "to contribute to equality of opportunity in access to education and successful learning".

The intention is not that preschool education should be organised in such a way as to prepare children for compulsory

education, but rather that it should prepare children for lifelong learning. However, it should prepare children to deal successfully with the next stage of education.

Preschool education has been singled out as a possible seed-bed for early academic failure where some children find out that they are not as capable as others. Sociological research has also shown that poor school performance is associated above all with the poorer classes, where there is a greater mismatch between the family's cultural background and that of the school.

In order for preschool education to be able to contribute to greater equality of opportunity, these curriculum guidelines stress the importance of a structured teaching approach, which implies intentional and systematic organisation of the learning process and requires that the teacher plan his/her work and then assess the process and its effects on the children's development and learning.

Adopting an organised and structured pedagogical approach does not mean bringing into pre-school education certain "traditional" practices which make no sense to children, nor does it mean undermining the importance of the play side of many learning activities, since the pleasure of learning and

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

mastering certain skills requires real effort, concentration and personal investment.

Pre-school education creates the conditions for successful learning in all children, insofar as it promotes self-esteem and develops skills which enable each child to recognise his/her own potential and progress.

The different contexts for pre-school education are thus spaces where children build their own learning process, in such a way as to "foster the training and balanced development of the child".

This statement of the general principle is the grounds for the aim of stimulating "each child's overall development, with respect for his/her individual characteristics, inculcating patterns of behaviour favourable to significant and diversified learning"

This aim points towards the interlinking of development and learning defended by a series of different modern strands of psychology and sociology, which consider that the human being develops through a process of social interaction. Within this perspective, the child plays an active role in his/her interaction with the environment which, in turn, should provide favourable conditions for development and learning.

Admitting that the child plays an active part in the construction of his/her own development and learning means that (s)he should be seen as the subject and not the object in the educational process.

In this sense, it is important to stress that pre-school education should start from what children already know, their own culture and individual knowledge.

Respecting and valuing the individual characteristics of each child, the fact that each child is different, is the basis for new learning. The opportunity to take advantage of a diversified range of educational experiences in a context which facilitates broad social interaction with other children and adults, allows each child to contribute to the development and learning of others as (s)he builds his/her own development and learning.

Respect for differences in others includes children who do not follow "normal" patterns, and pre-school education should respond to any and every child. Within this perspective of the "inclusive school", pre-school education should adopt the practice of a differentiated teaching approach, centred on co-operation, including all children, accepting all differences, supporting learning and responding to individual needs.

The "inclusive school" concept assumes that the planning process should take the group into account. This plan is adapted and differentiated in line with children's individual characteristics, so as to offer each child stimulating conditions for his/her development and learning. By its reference to the group, it goes further than the view of integration that posited the need for individual and specific plans for "different" children. Thus even children diagnosed as having "special educational needs" are included in the group and benefit from the educational opportunities made available to all.

The conditions considered necessary for an "inclusive school", such as the efficient working of the educational establishment, the involvement of all interested parties - staff, children, parents and community -, team planning, are all aspects to be taken into account in the educational process to be developed in pre-school education.

The response which pre-school education should provide for all children is organised "with a view to his/her full integration in society as an autonomous, free and co-operative individual".

This last statement of the general principle guiding pre-school education is made concrete in different aims, and is directly related with the following:

"To promote the child's personal and social development based on experiences of democratic life within a perspective of education for citizenship;

To foster the child's integration in different social groups, teaching respect for different cultures and encouraging a growing awareness of his/her role as a member of society".

In its search to provide education for citizenship, the curriculum guidelines attribute particular importance to the organisation of the educational environment as a context for democratic life in which all children participate, where they come into contact with and learn to respect different cultures. It is this experience that provides the grounds for the area of personal and social education considered as an area integrating the whole process of preschool education.

It is also an aim of preschool education "To ensure each child's welfare and safety, especially in terms of individual and collective health".

Welfare and safety also depend on the educational environment, in which the child feels welcomed, listened to and valued, all of which contributes to his/her self-esteem and willingness to learn. An environment in which (s)he feels comfortable because his/her physical and psychological needs are satisfied. Welfare

related to individual and collective health is also a chance to provide health education, which is part of anyone's education as a citizen.

But the child's education, aimed at the child's full integration in society as an independent, free and co-operative being, also implies other ways of developing and learning, as referred to in the aim of developing "expression and communication through different forms as a means of relating, informing, raising aesthetic awareness and understanding the world".

This aim is dealt with in the areas of "expression and communication" and "knowledge of the world". There is a link between these two areas, but the first includes different types of expression divided into three main domains:

- different forms of expression - kinetic, dramatic, plastic and musical expression;
- language and an initial approach to writing, which includes other languages such as Information Technology and audio-visual expression, as well as a possible introduction to a foreign language;
- mathematics, considered as a language, is also part of the area of expression and communication.

Although mastery of these forms of expression is important in itself, they are also means of relating, raising aesthetic awareness and obtaining information. Thus the areas of expression and communication form a basic area which contributes simultaneously to personal and social training and to the child's knowledge of the world. In its turn, the "knowledge of the world" area makes it possible to articulate the other two, since it is through relations with others that personal identity is constructed and one's posture in the social and physical "world" takes shape. Making sense of this "world" depends on the use of symbolic and cultural systems.

Since these areas are not to be considered sealed compartments, it is important to interlink the different content areas and contextualise them in a given educational environment. Thus the organisation of the educational environment in its relation with the general environment is a support for curriculum development. Only this articulated process makes it possible to achieve another aim which should run through all preschool education "to arouse curiosity and critical thought"

This objective is made concrete in the different content areas which are articulated in a global education, and it is this early training which will be the grounds for lifelong learning.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Another statement contained in the general principle of the Law considers pre-school education as complementing "the education provided by the family, with which it should establish close co-operation".

This statement, which stresses the importance of relations with the family, can be seen in the objective of encouraging "family participation in the educational process and establish[ing] real co-operation with the community".

Parents or guardians are legally responsible for the child and their first and main educators. Since the prevailing fashion has now swung away from the idea of education compensating for what parents cannot provide, it is thought that the effects of pre-school education are closely related with the degree of articulation with families. The intention is not to compensate for the family background, but rather to use it as a starting point and take into account the culture(s) from which the children come. This is to ensure that pre-school education is then able to mediate between the children's culture of origin and the culture they will have to appropriate to learn successfully.

Since pre-school education is to be seen as complementary to the upbringing provided by the family, there must be articulation between the educational establishment and families.

aimed at finding within a certain social context the solutions best suited to children and families. It is thus the parents' right and duty to participate in the drafting of the educational plan of the school in question.

However, not only the family but also the social environment in which the child lives influences his/her education, and the school benefits from the united effort and the resources any community will make available for the education of its children and young people. Parents and other members of the community may therefore work together to develop the school's educational plan.

This process of collaboration with parents and the community has effects on children's education and consequences for the development and learning of adults involved in their education.

3. OVERALL GUIDELINES FOR THE PRESCHOOL TEACHER

The underlying intention of the education process which characterises the professional intervention of the nursery teacher involves different interlinked stages. The basic tenets of this approach are as follows:

Observing

Observing each child and the group to know their abilities, interests and difficulties and to gather information on family context and the environment in which the children live are necessary to understand the children's characteristics and to mould the educational process to respond to their needs. Knowledge of the child and his/her development are the basis for the different teaching approach which begins with what the child knows and is able to do, then broadens his/her interests and develop his/her potential. This knowledge is the result of continuous observation and pre-supposes the need for references such as what the children produce and different types of registers and records. This is fundamentally a question of having information which may be analysed periodically so as to be able to understand the process and its effects on each child's learning. Observation is thus the basis of planning and assessment, and serves as a support to the underlying intention of the educational process.

Planning

Planning the educational process in line with what the educator knows about the group and each child, his/her family and social background is an essential condition to ensure that pre-school education provides a stimulating environment for development and promotes significant and differentiated learning experiences contributing to greater equality of opportunity.

Planning implies that the educator reflects on underlying intentions and the ways of adapting these to the group, anticipating learning situations and experiences and organising the material and human resources necessary to ensure that they take place. Planning the learning environment allows children to explore and use the spaces, materials and instruments placed at their disposal, providing them with a range of diversified interaction with the whole group, in small groups and in pairs, and the possibility of interacting with other adults. This planning takes into account the different content areas and their articulation, as well as foreseeing the various possibilities which arise or change in accordance with situations and the children's proposals.

It is therefore the teacher's job to plan learning situations which are sufficiently challenging to interest and stimulate each child, providing support to enable the child to reach levels which (s)he could not reach alone, but avoiding the danger of being over-demanding, which might discourage the child and lead to low self-esteem.

Planning carried out with the participation of the children allows the group to benefit from the diversity, ability and skills of each child, in a sharing process which facilitates learning and development for each and every one.

Acting

Putting educational intentions into action, adapting them to the children's proposals and taking advantage of unforeseen situations and opportunities. The participation of other adults - auxiliary staff, parents, other members of the community - in bringing to fruition the educational opportunities planned by the preschool teacher is a way of broadening children's interactions and enriching the educational process.

Assessing

Assessing the process and its effects implies being aware of action in order to mould the educational process to the needs of the children and the group and their development.

Assessment done with the children is an educational experience, and it also serves as a basis for assessment for the nursery teacher. Reflection based on observed effects makes it possible to establish a progression in the learning experiences to be developed with each child. In this sense, assessment is a support for planning.

Communicating

The knowledge the preschool teacher acquires of the child and how (s)he develops is enriched by sharing with other adults who also have responsibility for the child's education, especially fellow teachers, auxiliary staff and parents. While team-work by professionals is a means of self-training with benefits for the child's education, exchanging opinions with the

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

parents provides greater knowledge of the child and other contexts influencing his/her education: family and community.

Articulating

It is the teacher's duty to promote educational continuity in a process which begins with entry into pre-school education and ends with the move to basic school. The relationship established with parents before the child attends nursery school facilitates communication between the teacher and parents, thus encouraging the child's adaptation. It is also the nursery teacher's job to provide conditions for the child to be a successful learner in the next phase, and working with both the parents and primary school staff, to make the child's move to primary school

Ministério da Educação
Departamento da Educação Básica
Av. 24 de Julho, 140 - 6º
1300 Lisboa - Portugal
Tel: 01 - 397 71 29 - Fax: 01 - 397 98 65
http://www.deb.min-edu.pt